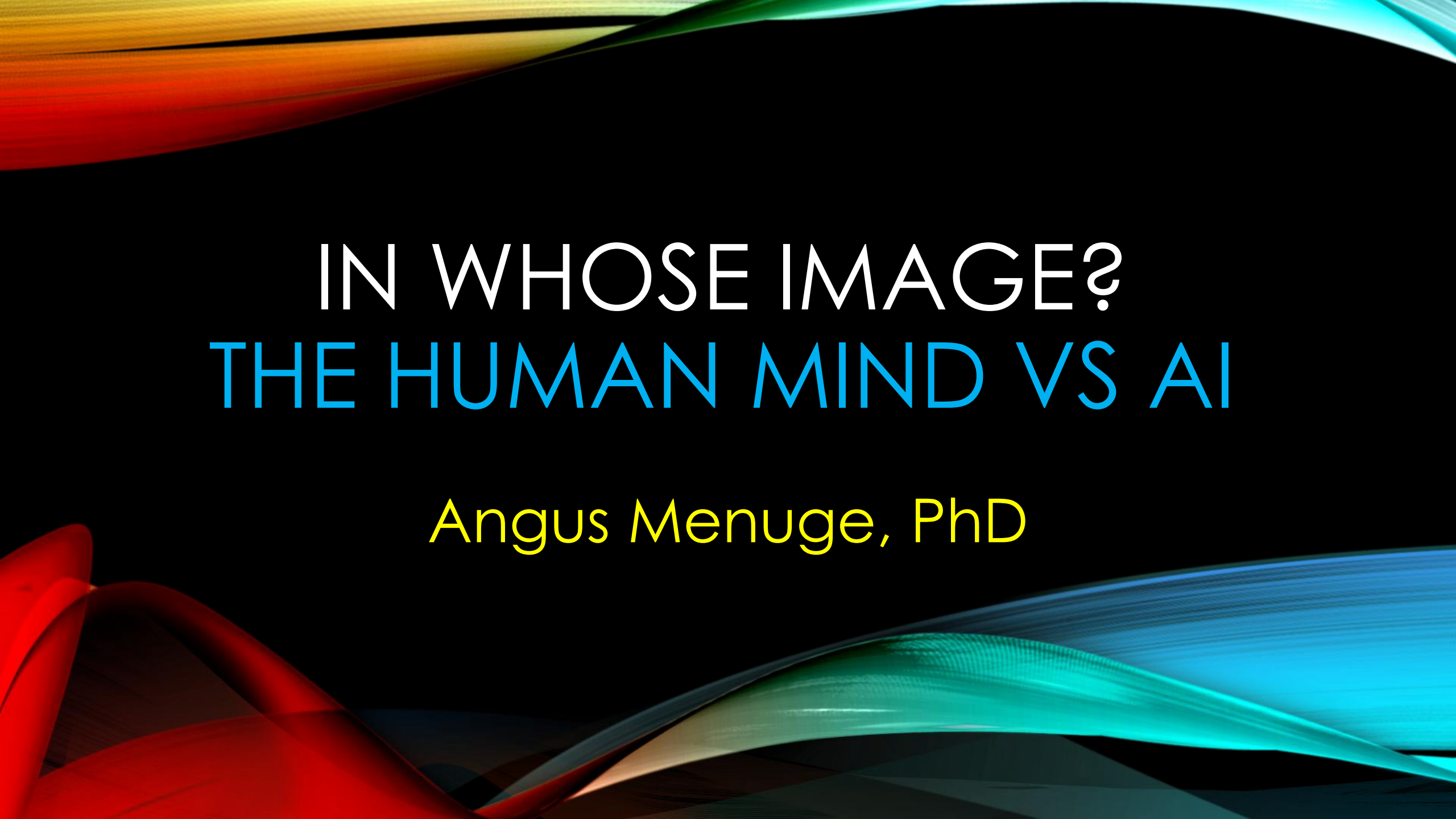




# IN WHOSE IMAGE? THE HUMAN MIND VS AI

Angus Menuge, PhD

# WORLDVIEWS:

COMPARING the Faith

# BIOETHICS:

APPLYING the Faith

# APOLOGETICS:

DEFENDING the Faith

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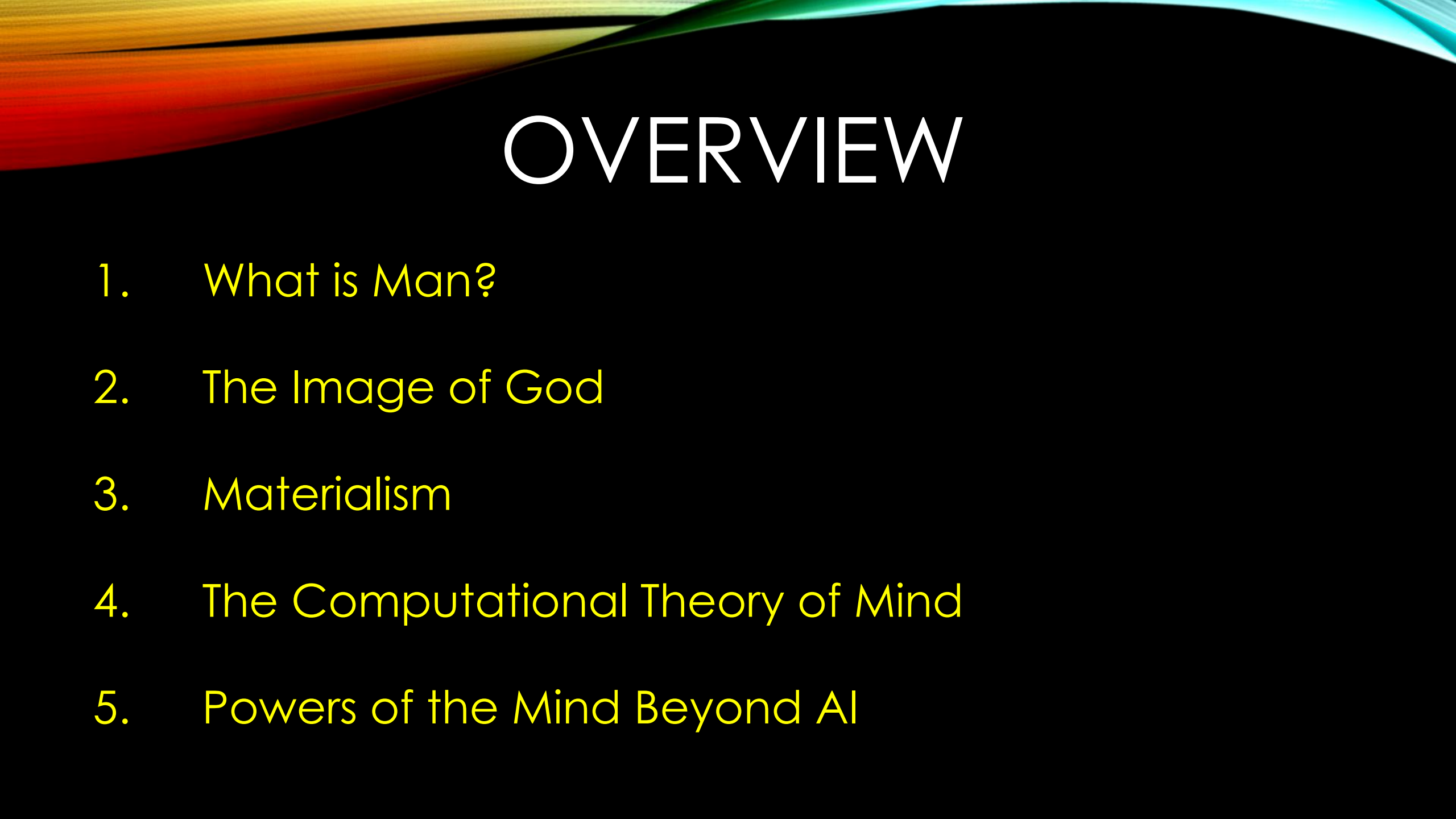
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# OVERVIEW

1. What is Man?
2. The Image of God
3. Materialism
4. The Computational Theory of Mind
5. Powers of the Mind Beyond AI

# 1. WHAT IS MAN?

When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,  
the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,

**what is man that you are mindful of him,**  
and the son of man that you care for him?

Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly  
beings and crowned him with glory and honor.

**You have given him dominion over the works of your hands;  
you have put all things under his feet**

--Psalm 8:3-6.

## A. WHAT IS A HUMAN BEING?

Is a human a special kind of being?

- A little lower than the heavenly beings?
- Crowned with glory and honor?

Or is there nothing special about us?

- Are human beings just one more organism, another part of nature?

## B. WHY DOES IT MATTER?

- Do human beings have special dignity, uniquely human rights, and permission to care for the rest of the world?
- Or are they just organic machines with no special value, rights or permissions?

## 2. THE IMAGE OF GOD

- God made the first humans, male and female, in His triune image (Gen. 1:26-27).
- Like all things God made, humans were made good, yet they were also made **social** creatures, **dependent** on God, and made for interpersonal relationships.

## A. ORIGINAL RIGHTEOUSNESS.

- In the beginning, man was “created with wisdom and righteousness,” which means that:
- “Mankind was given the gift of knowing God, fearing God, and being confident in God.”

--“Apology of the Augsburg Confession,” article II (Original Sin), in *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2005), 78, emphasis mine.

## B. THE IMPACT OF THE FALL

- After the Fall, we “not only lack fear and trust in God, but also do not even have the power or gifts to produce fear and trust in God.”  
--“Apology of the Augsburg Confession,” 76.
- The natural man no longer reveres God as his creator, trusts Him to provide for him, or loves Him as the source of everything which he has.

# UNFALLEN MAN

- **Like a worshipful temple, with strong pillars, supporting a golden roof.**
- The pillars are the natural faculties of man: reason, senses, will, and knowledge.
- The golden roof is the crown of original righteousness.

# THE IMAGE OF GOD IN FALLEN MAN



# IS ANYTHING LEFT OF THE IMAGE OF GOD?

“When Adam had lived 130 years, he fathered a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth.” (Gen. 5:3)

- Seth was made in the image of Adam.
- Seth received whatever was left of the image of God:
  - Was it something or nothing?
  - Is the image of God still significant after the Fall?

THE ROOF IS GONE. THE PILLARS ARE MARRED.  
BUT SOMETHING REMAINS THAT POINTS TO FORMER GLORY.

15



# MAN'S DIGNITY REMAINS

Genesis 9:6: “Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his image.”

James 3:9-10 rebukes us for cursing those who are  
“made in the likeness of God.”

- Both appeal to the enduring value of fallen man.

# MAN'S SPECIAL CALLING REMAINS

- Man was given dominion over the rest of creation (Gen 1:26).
- Made more difficult by the fall (Gen. 3:17-19), the right of dominion *continues* (Gen. 9:8-17).
- As the right of dominion is a consequence of being made in the image of God, traces of that image must remain in fallen man.

# THE COVENANT WITH NOAH AND ALL CREATURES

“Behold, I establish my covenant with you and your offspring after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the livestock, and every beast of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark; it is for every beast of the earth.” (Gen. 9:9-10)

- The covenant applies to “all future generations” (Gen. 9:12)

# MAN KNOWS HE HAD ORIGINAL RIGHTEOUSNESS

- Pascal: man is a paradox.
- He is both wretched **and** great
- He is great because he knows he falls short of a standard intended for him.

# BLAISE PACSCAL (1623-1662)



“Man’s greatness comes from knowing he is wretched: a tree does not know it is wretched.... **It is the wretchedness of a great lord, of a dispossessed king.**”

Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, #114, #116.

# WE KNOW WHAT WE HAVE LOST

- “[I]f man had never been corrupted, he would, in his innocence, confidently enjoy both truth and felicity, and if man had never been anything but corrupt, he would have no idea of truth or bliss.” --Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, #131.
- We know we were intended for a greatness we cannot attain.

# WE CAN SEE OUR NEED FOR CHRIST

- Man discerns the “infinite abyss” in himself which can only be filled by an “infinite and immutable object...by God himself.”  
*Blaise Pascal, Pensées, #148.*
- Pascal argues that the only solution to this riddle is the scriptural one: **that man was made like God and yet fell into sin.**  
*Blaise Pascal, Pensées, #131.*

# IMAGE OF GOD IN THE BROAD SENSE

**“‘the image of God’ is equivalent to ‘the likeness of God’.”**

—Nathan Jastram, “Man as Male and Female: Created in the Image of God,” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* Volume 68: 1 (January, 2004): 5-96.,46, italics original.

- In this broad sense, the image of God, though marred, remains in fallen man.

# THE CHRISTIAN DIFFERENCE: RIGHTEOUSNESS IS RESTORED

“**put off your old self**, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, ...**put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.**” (Ephesians 4:23-24).

### 3. MATERIALISM

- Epicureanism (Epicurus (341-270 BC))
- Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679).
- Julien Onfray de la Mettrie (1709-1751)
- Daniel Dennett (1942-2024).

# IS MAN JUST A MACHINE?

- Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679)
  - Thinking is only motion in the brain
  - Reasoning is only “reckoning” (computation)
- Julien Onfray de la Mettrie (1709-1751)
  - Author of *L’homme Machine* (Man a Machine)
  - Man is an organic machine
  - There is no immaterial soul

# JULIEN ONFRAY DE LA METTRIE (1709-1751).

“[S]ince all the faculties of the soul depend to such a degree on the proper organization of the brain and of the whole body, that apparently they are but this organization itself, **the soul is clearly an enlightened machine.**” ---

*La Mettrie, Man a Machine (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1943), 128.*

“[T]he soul is but...the mainspring of the whole machine.”

--- *La Mettrie, Man a Machine, 135.*

# THERE IS NOTHING SPECIAL ABOUT MAN

“it may come to pass that enlightened minds may one day abhor ‘speciesism’ as much as... ‘racism.’”

--Richard Ryder, "Experiments on Animals," in Stanley and Roslind Godlovitch and John Harris (eds.), *Animals, Men and Morals*, (Victor Gollanz, 1971), 41–82, 81.

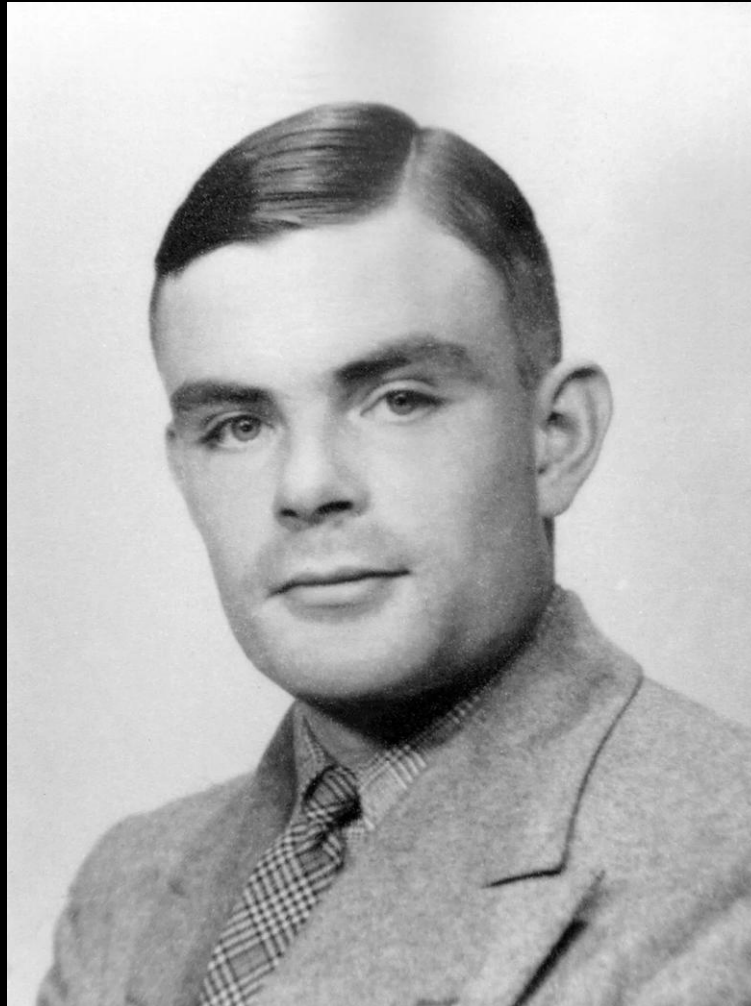
“[W]e are not entitled—not on evolutionary grounds, at any rate—to regard our own adaptive behavior as ‘better’ or ‘higher’ than that of a cockroach, who...is adapted equally well to life in its own... niche.”

--James Rachels, *Created From Animals: The Moral Implications of Darwinism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 70.

# BUT WHAT IS A MACHINE?

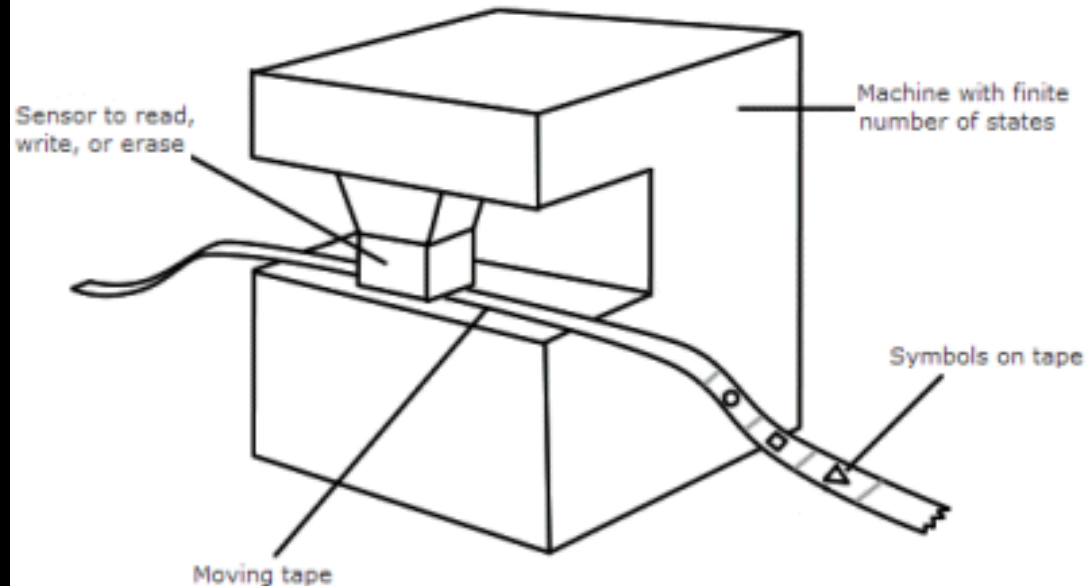
- Hobbes and de la Mettrie leave it unclear what we mean by “machine”
- We need a precise definition to assess the thesis
- Enter...The Idea of the Modern Digital Computer

# ALAN TURING (1912-1954)

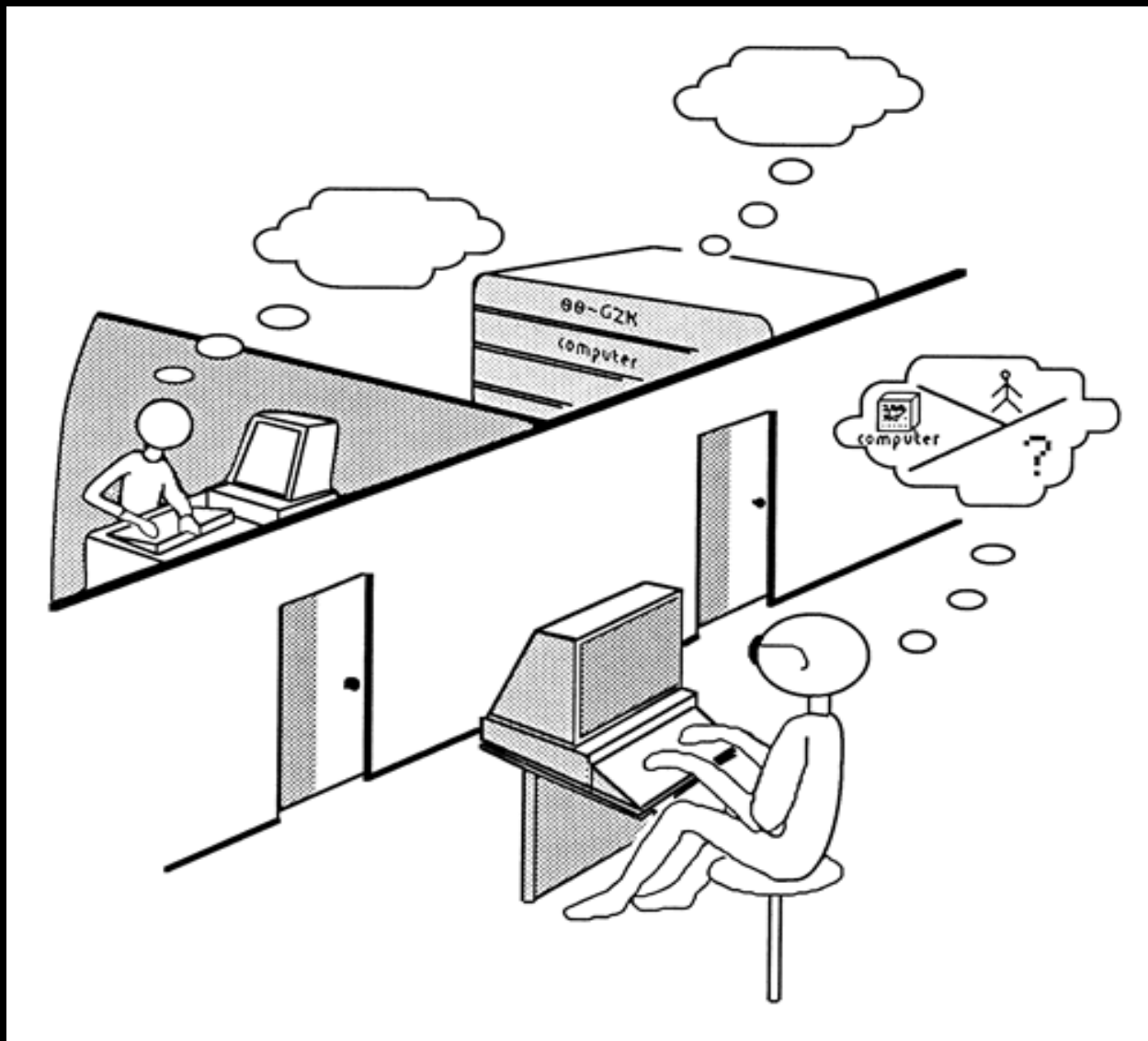


# THE IDEA OF THE MODERN COMPUTER

A Turing machine is a theoretical generalized computer, composed of a tape on which symbols representing instructions are imprinted. The tape can move backwards and forwards in the machine, which can read the instructions and write the resultant output back onto the tape.



# THE TURING TEST

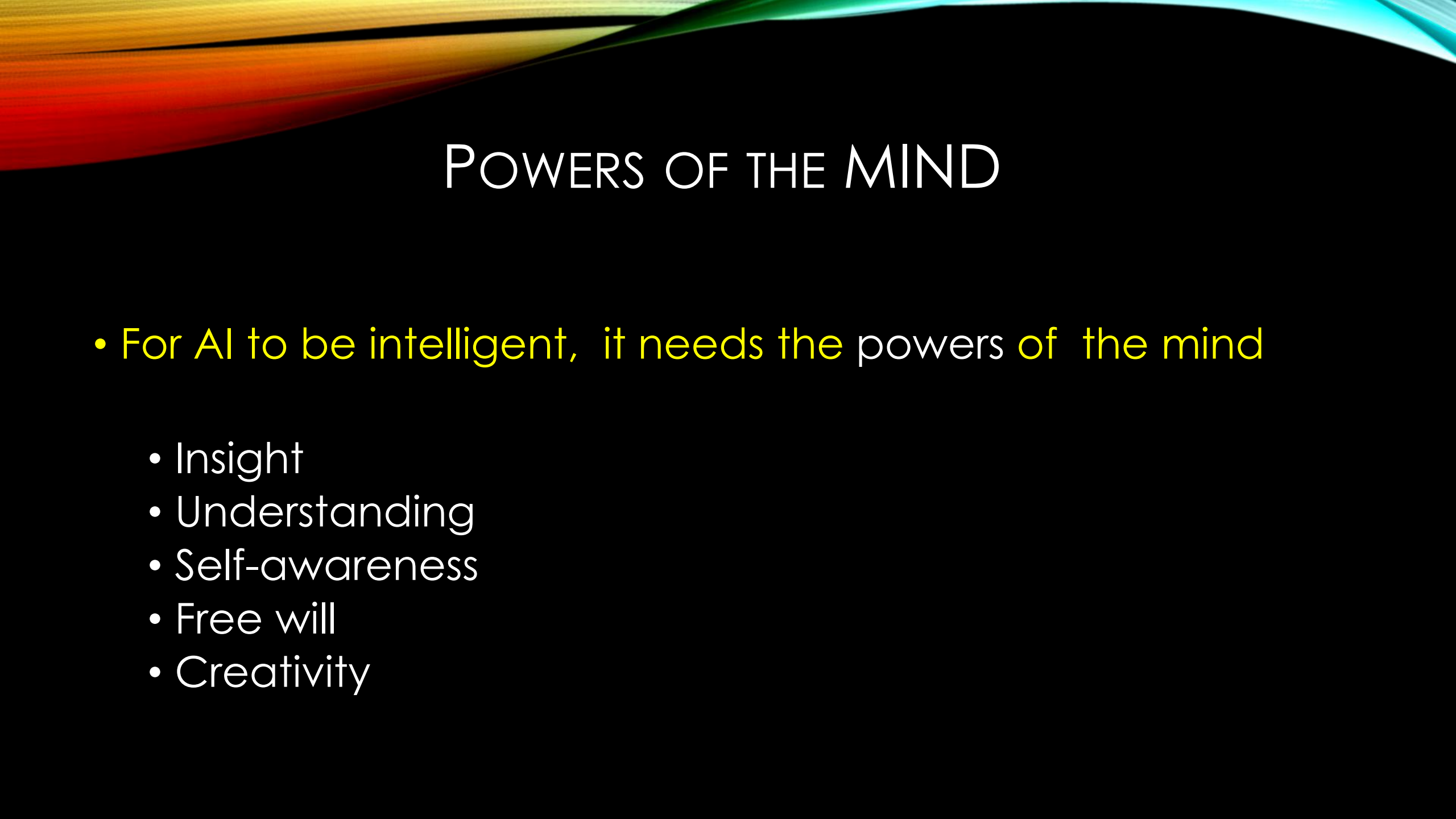


# ACTING LIKE A HUMAN

- If a computer passes as a human as often as a human does, the computer is “intelligent”
- Treats intelligence as a behavioral concept:
  - A system is called intelligent if it produces behavior like ours

# WEAKNESSES OF THE TURING TEST

- Passing the test is not **necessary** for intelligence:
  - An intelligent being might not be able to communicate  
e.g. someone with a speech/motor disorder, catalepsy
- Passing the test is not **sufficient** for intelligence:
  - A radio broadcast of Einstein
  - Talking to a smart person on the phone
- Radios and phones are conduits of intelligence, not sources



# POWERS OF THE MIND

- For AI to be intelligent, it needs the powers of the mind
  - Insight
  - Understanding
  - Self-awareness
  - Free will
  - Creativity

## 4. THE COMPUTATIONAL THEORY OF MIND

- Human cognitive powers are captured by a Turing machine.
- We are organic realizations of a Turing Machine.
- Ray Kurzweil:
- Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) is within our grasp.

# ARTIFICIAL GENERAL INTELLIGENCE

“a capacity to learn...the ability to deal effectively with uncertainty... [and a] faculty for extracting useful concepts...for...logical and intuitive reasoning”

--Nick Bostrom, *Superintelligence: Paths, Dangers, Strategies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 23.

# THE SINGULARITY?

- **Kurzweil:** we can develop systems that can think in the same, fully general way as humans
- **This will lead to a “singularity”:**
  - artificial systems will meet or exceed the standards of human intelligence in all areas
  - humans and machines will merge

# LARGE LANGUAGE MODELS

“GPT-4 can solve novel and difficult tasks that span mathematics, coding, vision, medicine, law, psychology and more, without needing any special prompting. Moreover, in all of these tasks, GPT-4's performance is strikingly close to human-level performance.”

--Sébastien Bubeck, Varun Chandrasekaran, Ronen Eldan, Johannes Gehrke, Eric Horvitz, Ece Kamar, Peter Lee, Yin Tat Lee, Yuanzhi Li, Scott Lundberg, Harsha Nori, Hamid Palangi, Marco Ribeiro, and Yi Zhang. “Sparks of Artificial General Intelligence: Early experiments with GPT-4.” 10.48550/arXiv.2303.12712 (2023). Available at: <https://arxiv.org/pdf/2303.12712>.

## 5. POWERS OF THE MIND BEYOND AI

- (1) Insight (recognizing the truth)
- (2) Meta-insight (self-awareness)
- (3) Free will
- (4) Access to necessity
- (5) Non-combinatorial creativity

# (1) INSIGHT INTO TRUTH

- AI systems can “find” important truths
- With sufficient training, ChatGPT can find a correct rule of inference, e.g. modus ponens:

If A then B

A

Therefore, B

If copper is heated it expands

Copper is heated

Therefore, It expands

# DOES IT RECOGNIZE THE TRUTH?

- If we re-train the system on fallacious reasoning, it will find false rules e.g. affirming the consequent:

If A then B

B

Therefore, A

If it rains, I get wet

I get wet

Therefore, It rained

# THE HUMAN DIFFERENCE

- Once one “sees” (an act of mental insight) that something is true (e.g.  $2+2=4$ ), one is not moved by contrary claims
- Knowledge is anchored in a logos (Meno 98a): one sees the reason why something is true

# THE HUMAN DIFFERENCE

“For true opinions...are not willing to remain long, and they escape from a man’s mind, so that they are not worth much until one ties them down [**anchors them**] by (giving) an account of the reason why [**a logos**]” (Meno 97e-98a)

# DOES CHATGPT UNDERSTAND?

“The basic concept of ChatGPT is...rather simple. Start from a huge sample of human-created text.... Then train a neural net to generate text that’s ‘like this.’”

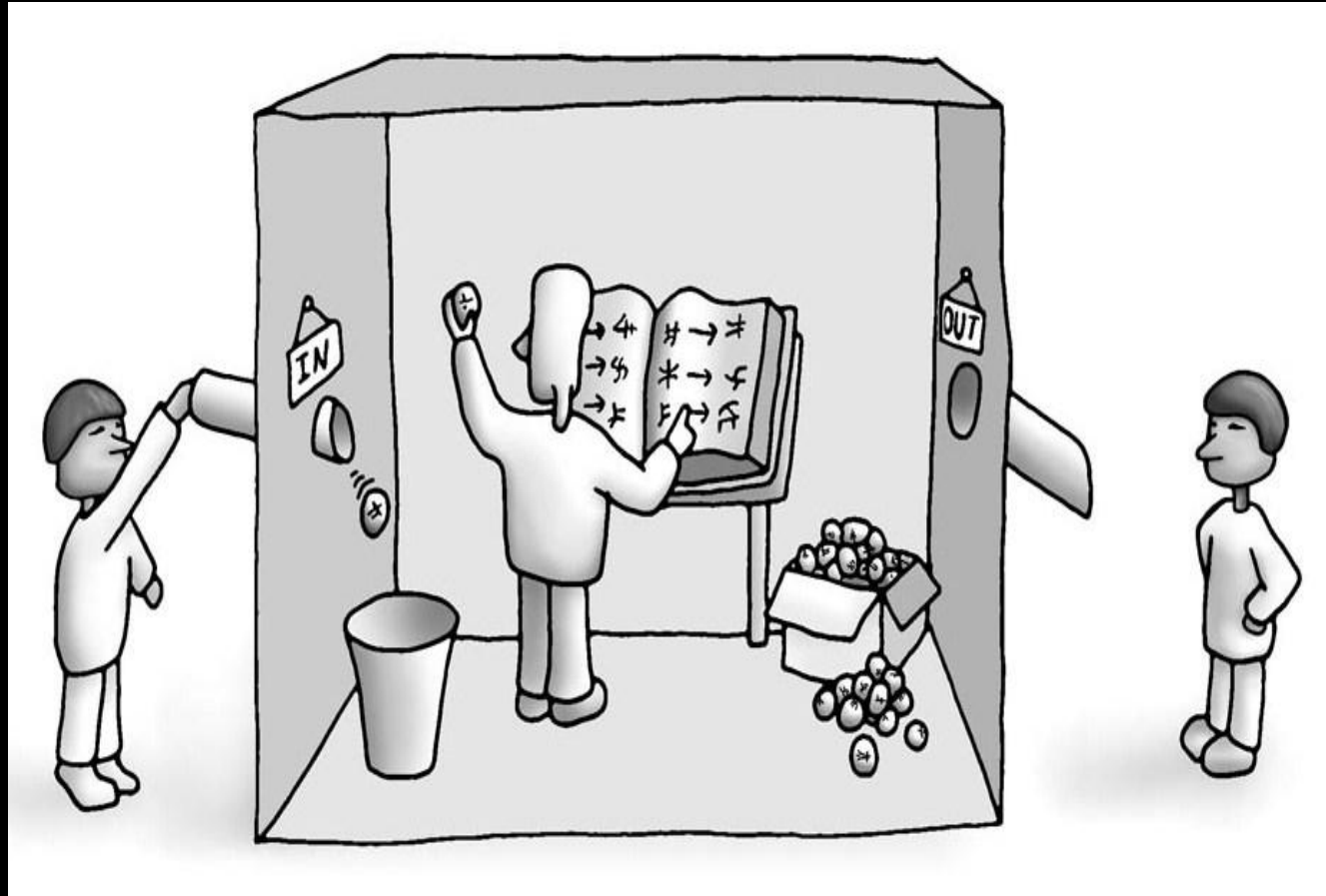
--Stephen Wolfram, *What is ChatGPT Doing...and Why Does it Work?* (Wolfram Media Inc, 2023), 75.

- Given a prompt, ChatGPT uses vast amounts of text to predict the probable completions, one “token” at a time.
- It does not understand the **meaning** of these tokens.

# THE CAT SAT ON THE....

| Completion | Probability |
|------------|-------------|
| Aardvark   | 0.0         |
| Fridge     | 0.05        |
| Mat        | 0.2         |
| Lobster    | 0.0         |

# JOHN SEARLE'S CHINESE ROOM



# A FURTHER PROBLEM

The truths of logic and mathematics depend on abstract objects and relations that do not exist in space and time

How can a purely physical AI system interact with rules of inference, numbers, shapes, etc.?

## (2) META-INSIGHT

- Some programs get into infinite loops:
  - Step 1: Execute Step 2
  - Step 2: Execute Step 1
- Humans can also follow looping instructions e.g. in an index:
  - Infinite loop: see Vicious circle
  - Vicious circle: see Infinite loop

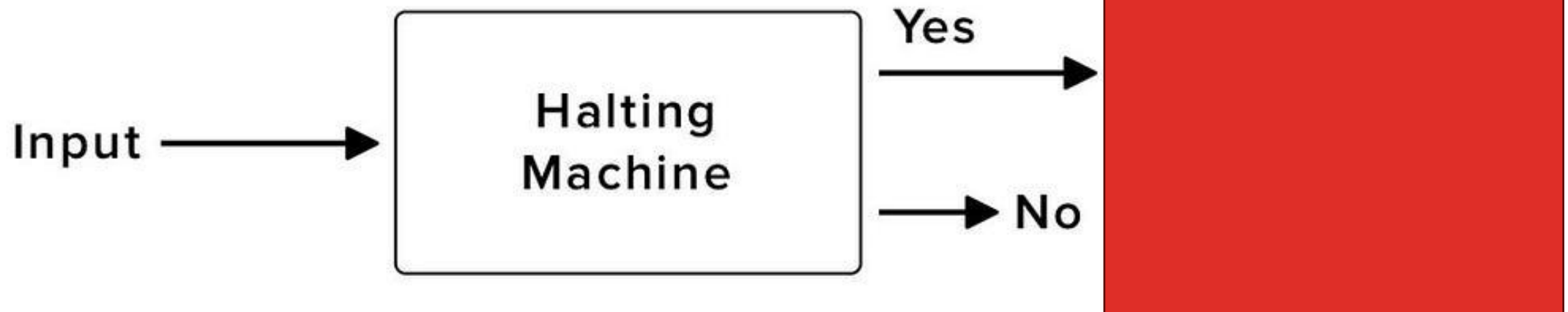
# THE HUMAN DIFFERENCE

- Once a program gets into an infinite loop, it cannot stop itself
  - An operator or error-handler must externally terminate the program
- Humans have meta-insight: they are not only aware of instructions, but are aware of themselves
- Since we know (or suspect) where we will go if we follow instructions, we can exit an infinite loop

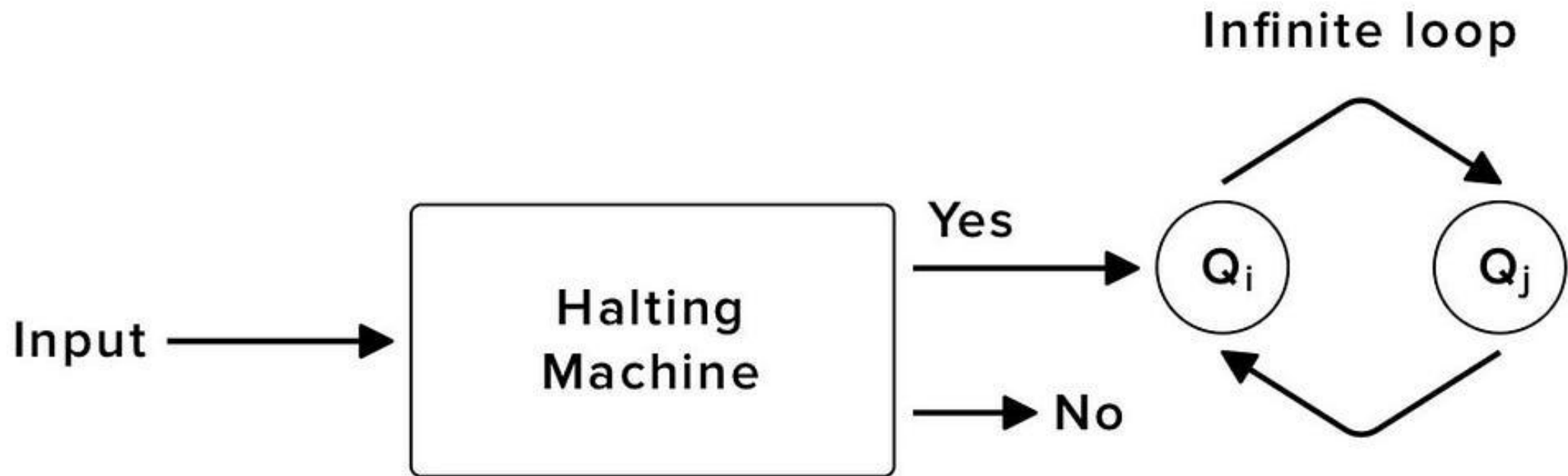
# COULD A MACHINE DO THIS?

- We can add an error-handler  $E$  to a machine  $M$ , so that the resulting machine will abort if  $M$  is in an infinite loop
- But now we have a different machine  $M^* = M + E$
- $M^*$  can still get into its own infinite loop
- No program can solve the halting problem

# THERE IS NO UNIVERSAL HALTING MACHINE



# THERE IS NO UNIVERSAL HALTING MACHINE



# THE KEY DIFFERENCE

- To exit an infinite loop, a machine needs an external intervention:
  - User
  - Operating system
  - Error-handler
- A human can exit an infinite loop through an internal power:
  - It is aware of where it is going
  - It can choose to abort the process

# SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS

“A machine can be made in a manner of speaking to ‘consider’ its own performance, but it cannot take this ‘into account’ without thereby becoming a different machine... But it is inherent in our idea of a conscious mind that it can reflect upon itself and criticize its own performances, and no extra part is required to do this.”

--John R. Lucas, “Minds, Machines and Gödel,” *Philosophy*, Vol. 36, no. 137 (1961): 112-127, 125.

## (3) FREE WILL

- Computers do what instructions and data make them do
- They do not have active power to do otherwise
- Humans can choose to respond differently to the same data

# EXAMPLES

- Tuning in to one voice at a party
- Downward suppression of negative emotions
  - K. N. Ochsner et. al., "Re-thinking feelings: an fMRI study of the cognitive regulation of emotion." *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience*, 14 (2002), 1215-1229.
- Cognitive therapy for OCD
  - Jeffrey M. Schwartz and Sharon Begley, *The Mind and the Brain: Neuroplasticity and the Power of Mental Force* (San Francisco: Harper, 2002).

# BRAIN LOCK

- Patients with OCD feel a repeated urge to do something they know is futile
- OCD leads to a detectable abnormality, “brain lock”
- If OCD is untreated, and the patient yields to these urges, it becomes more and more like an infinite loop

# COGNITIVE THERAPY FOR OCD

- When patients are seized with the urge to repeat a futile behavior, they consciously refocus their attention on an alternative (such as reading)
- After ten weeks of therapy, the neurological connections supporting brain lock were significantly reduced and new neural pathways were formed (neuroplasticity)
- Patients found it easier to resist their obsessive-compulsive urges
- Unlike machines, human beings can alter how they process the same data, and change their “hardware” (the brain), an active power that machines lack

# (4) ACCESS TO NECESSITY

- Recall “finding” modus ponens
- As machines only learn from past patterns of training data, they can only learn that a rule has held in the past
- They cannot know that the rule will hold in the future or that it must hold (in all possible worlds)

# EXPERIENCE CAN'T PROVE NECESSITY

“Experience teaches us that a thing is so and so, but not that it cannot be otherwise... When, on the other hand, strict universality is necessary to a judgment, this indicates a special source of knowledge, a faculty of *a priori* knowledge.”

--Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (London: The Macmillan Press, Ltd, 1982), B3-B4, 43-44.

# THE HUMAN DIFFERENCE

Human logic students can prove that a rule of inference is universally valid

“My belief that things which are equal to the same thing are equal to one another is not at all based on the fact that I have never caught them behaving otherwise. I see that it ‘must’ be so.”

--C. S. Lewis, *Miracles: A Preliminary Study* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), 30-31.

# (5) NON-COMBINATORIAL CREATIVITY

- Margaret Boden (*The Creative Mind*) distinguishes 3 types of creativity:
- Combinatorial
  - Recombining products of human creativity
- Exploratory
  - Exploring the conceptual space within existing parameters
- Transformational
  - Changing the conceptual space

# WHAT LLMS CAN DO

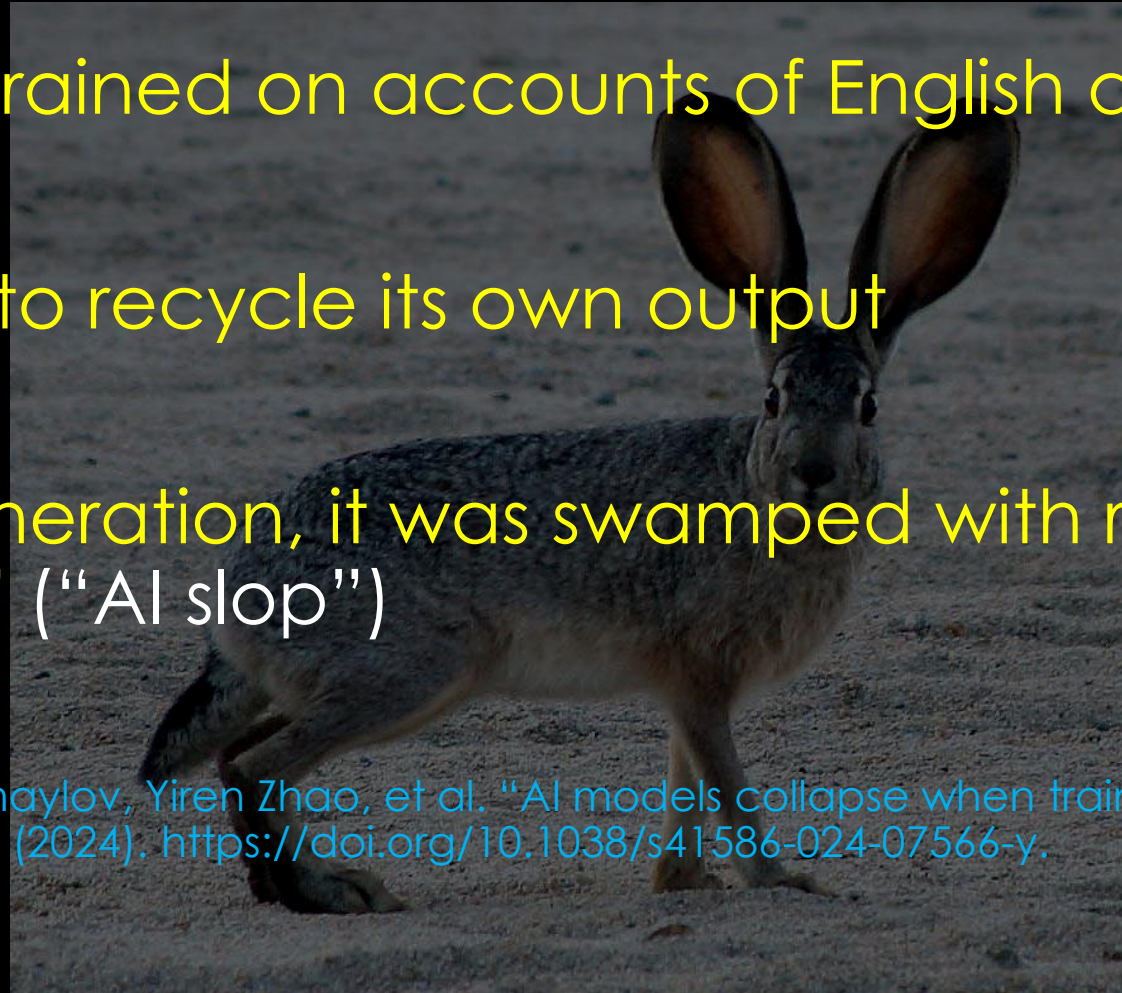
- LLMs are very good at combinatorial “creativity”
  - GPT-4 can generate a Platonic dialogue that applies Plato’s critique of rhetoric and sophistry to [LLMs], and a proof of the infinity of prime numbers in the form of a Shakespearean play
- But they are parasitic on past human creativity

# MODEL COLLAPSE

- LLMs were originally trained on human generated data
- But LLMs have produced a vast amount of synthetic data
- So LLMs are increasingly trained on the output of LLMs!
- This leads to a form of “intelligence entropy”: analogous to in-breeding, if LLMs consume their own output as input, they degenerate and their responses become “dumber”

# A FAMOUS EXAMPLE

- A LLM was first trained on accounts of English architecture
- Then it was left to recycle its own output
- By the ninth generation, it was swamped with repeated mention of “jackrabbits” (“AI slop”)
- Ilya Shumailov, Zhakar Shumaylov, Yiren Zhao, et al. “AI models collapse when trained on recursively generated data.” *Nature* 631: 755–759 (2024). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41586-024-07566-y>.



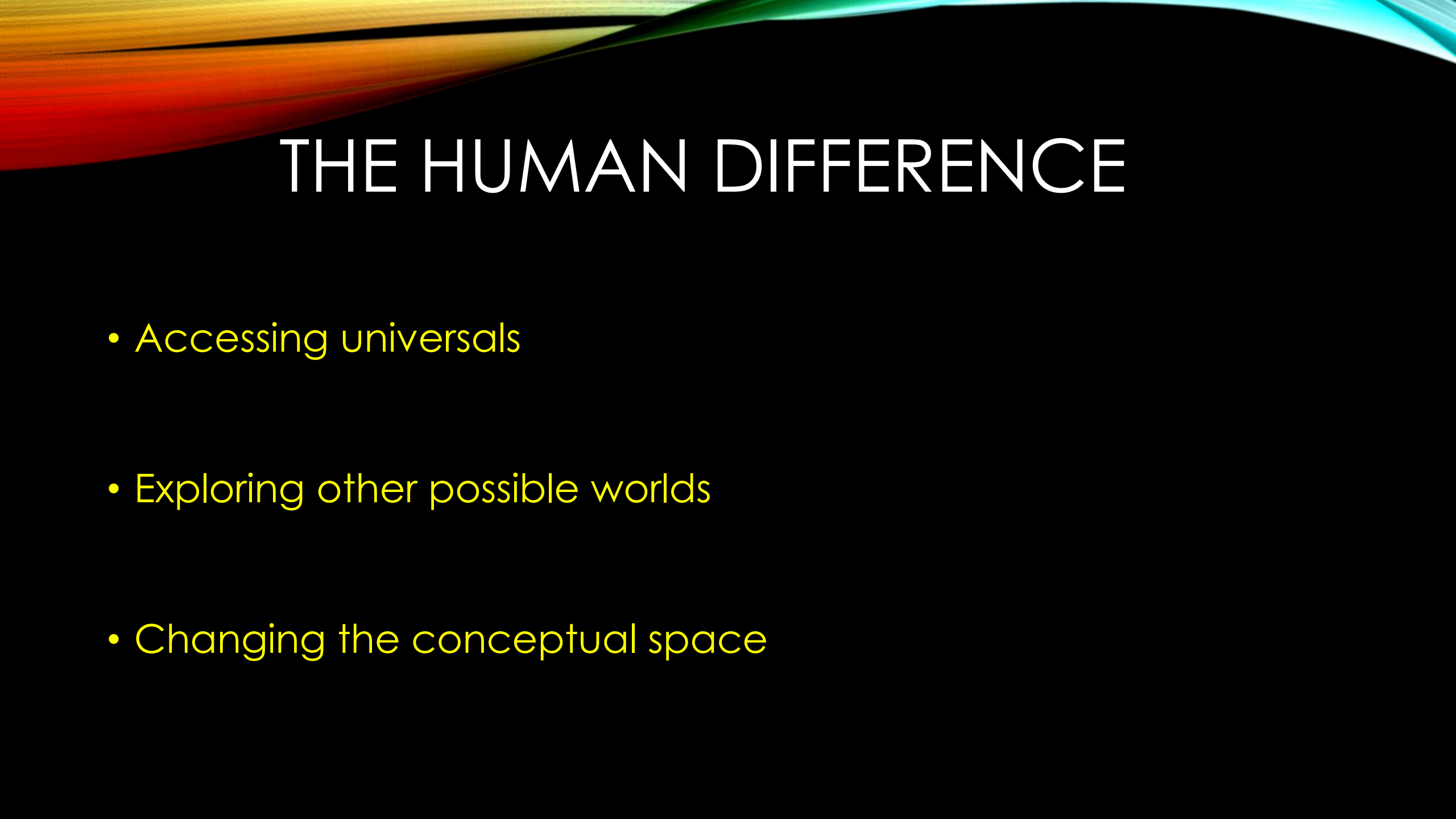
# GENETIC ALGORITHMS

- Exploratory creativity?

Many systems “explore” the logical space by trial and error  
A system “survives” if it finds a solution

- But this is not recognition of truth

- It is not the same as the way a human explores logical space
  - E.g. Garry Kasparov



# THE HUMAN DIFFERENCE

- Accessing universals
- Exploring other possible worlds
- Changing the conceptual space

# ACCESSING UNIVERSALS

“When we can take **green** from grass, **blue** from heaven, and **red** from blood, we have already an enchanter’s power . . . We may put a deadly **green** on a man’s face and produce a horror; we may make the rare and terrible **blue** moon to shine; or we may cause woods to spring with **silver** leaves and rams to wear fleeces of **gold**, and put **hot** fire into the belly of the **cold** worm. But in such ‘fantasy’, as it is called, new form is made . . . Man becomes a **sub-creator**.”

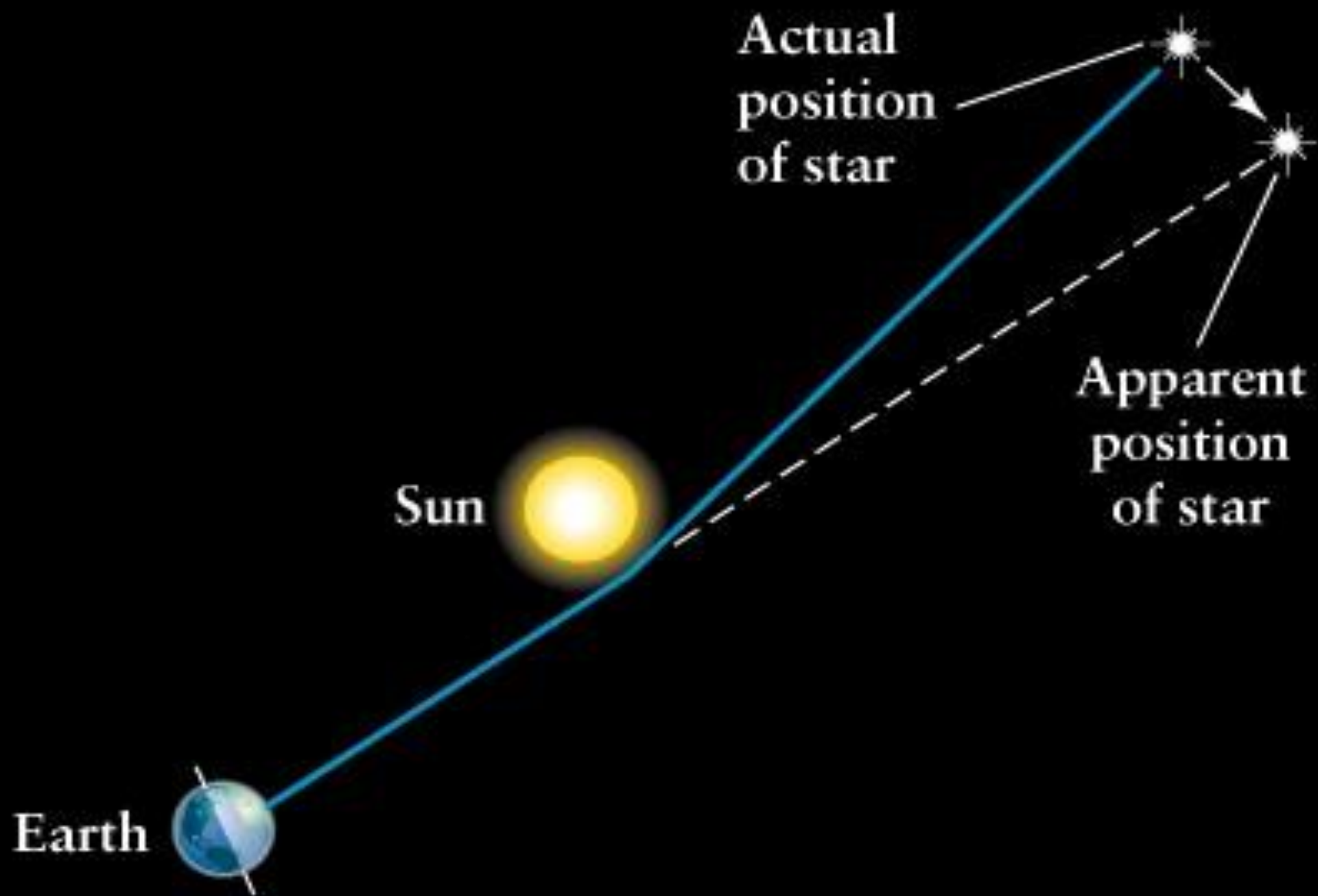
— J. R. R. Tolkien, “On Fairy Stories”

# EXPLORING OTHER POSSIBLE WORLDS

- Through connections between universals, one can think of:
- Unprecedented ideas:
  - Leonardo da Vinci: the helicopter
  - Jules Verne: the airship
  - Charles Babbage & Alan Turing: the general purpose digital computer
- Other worlds:
  - Flatland, Middle-earth, Narnia, Star Wars, Hogwarts
  - Counterfactuals

# TRANSFORMATIONAL CREATIVITY

- Einstein:
  - What if space is curved or time can slow down?
  - What if classic physics is wrong?
- Gödel:
  - What if arithmetic can talk about itself?
  - We can construct an arithmetical statement that is **true if and only if it is unprovable**. Arithmetic is incomplete!



# BEYOND EXTRAPOLATION

- Einstein's and Gödel's discoveries were not extrapolations of past knowledge
- They both made claims that were literally impossible given previous assumptions:
  - Of course light cannot bend!
  - Of course arithmetic cannot talk about itself!

# CONCLUSION

- Computers can produce intelligent behavior
- But they are trapped inside their instructions
- We have independent powers of insight, free-will, and creativity
- We are not just organic machines
- Computers are made in our image, not God's

# FURTHER RESOURCES

Angus J. L. Menuge, "Powers of the Soul Beyond AI," *Religions* 17, no. 1 (2026) available at:

<https://www.mdpi.com/2077-1444/17/1/8>

Joshua Pauling, "The Education and Formation of Whole Persons in the Digital Age," *Lutheran Mission Matters*, November 2025 available at:

[https://lsfm.global/uploads/Nov%202025/02\\_Pauling\\_Nov\\_2025.pdf](https://lsfm.global/uploads/Nov%202025/02_Pauling_Nov_2025.pdf)

*Antiqua et Nova*, a 2025 Roman Catholic note on AI and human dignity, available at:

[https://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_dcf\\_doc\\_20250128\\_antiqua-et-nova\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_dcf_doc_20250128_antiqua-et-nova_en.html)

Andy Steiger, "Artificial Dignity: The Humanizing and Dehumanizing Implications of Polanyi vs. Turing's Ontology," in Angus J. L. Menuge and Barry W. Bussey, eds., *The Inherence of Human Dignity*, volume 1 (London: Anthem Press, 2021), available at:

<https://apologeticscanada.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Artificial-Dignity.pdf>